

## Message Text

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51

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 L-03 MC-02 COME-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 CAB-09 FAA-00 OPIC-12

PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-15 PM-07 RSR-01 /101 W

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R 021211Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8316

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BONN

USCINCEUR/ECJ7

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 4437

PASS COMMERCE

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ETRD, MASS, BE

SUBJECT: PENDING BELGIAN PURCHASES OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT

REF: BRUSSELS 3952

1. LOCAL ATTENTION TO PENDING GOB PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR T-33S AND FOUGA MAGISTERS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED IN ANTICIPATION OF JULY 26 MEETING OF RESTRICTED BELGIAN ECONOMIC CABINET. PREDICTIONS THAT DECISION ON FOLLOW-UP AIRCRAFT TO F-104S WOULD BE MADE AT THIS MEETING PROVED, AS EXPECTED, TO BE FALSE. DECISION ON JET TRAINER REPLACEMENTS WAS PUT OFF UNTIL MID-SEPTEMBER. F-104 FOLLOW-UP DECISION MAY NOT COME FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS. HOWEVER, ACTIVE EVALUATION OF POSSIBILITIES IS PRESENTLY BEING DONE BY BELGIAN AIR STAFF.

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2. PRESS COVERAGE CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE SWEDISH AND FRENCH

AIRCRAFT AS PRIMARY COMPETITORS FOR BOTH CONTRACTS. SAAB 105 HAD LONG BEEN FAVORITE OF BELGIAN AIR FORCE FOR TRAINING AIRCRAFT BUT GOB (PARTICULARLY MINECONAFFAIRS) HAS NOW APPARENTLY SHIFTED TO FRENCH/GERMAN ALPHA-JET DESPITE SERIOUS PROBLEM CONCERNING LATE DELIVERY DATE. ESTIMATED FIRST ALPHA-JET NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL 1978. AS REPORTED REFTEL, DECISION TO BUY BOEING 737S FOR SABENA OVER FRENCH MERCURE HAS LED TO SOME PRESSURE TO "COMPENSATE" FRENCH. IN ADDITION FRENCH MANUFACTURER OF BOTH ALPHA-JET AND SUPER F-1 MIRAGE HAS PROPOSED PACKAGE COMPENSATION DEAL FOR BOTH PLANES WHICH REPORTEDLY VERY ATTRACTIVE. SWEDES HAVE COUNTERED WITH OFFER TIED TO SAAB 105 AND VIGGEN 37.

3. TENOR OF PRESS COVERAGE WOULD INDICATE THAT FRENCH FIRST IN RUNNING FOR JET TRAINER CONTRACT. RELEVANT TO PACKAGE DEAL, IS REPORT THAT BELGIAN FOREIGN OFFICE CAUTIONED OTHER MINISTRIES TO AVOID PLACING BELGIUM IN POSITION OF BEING COMPLETELY SUPPLIED BY (I.E., "DEPENDENT UPON") ONE MANUFACTURER; E.G., THE FRENCH. THERE ARE ALREADY MANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS ON MAINTENANCE SUPPORT FOR THE MIRAGE V. BRITISH STILL PUSHING HARD WITH HAWKER 1182 BUT ITALIAN MACCHI APPARENTLY OUT OF RUNNING. CESSNA A-37 OR NORTH AMERICAN ROCKWELL BUCKEYE T-2D ARE STILL VERY LONG SHOTS BUT PRICE ADVANTAGE COULD YET BE IMPORTANT AND MAAG-BELLUX IN TOUCH WITH US COMPANIES IN ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE A MORE AGGRESSIVE SALES EFFORT ON THEIR PART.

4. RECENT SHIFT IN EMPHASIS FROM SAAB 105 TO ALPHA-JET DEMONSTRATES DECISION STILL OPEN ON TRAINER AIRCRAFT AND SERIOUS EFFORT BY US COMPANIES MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE. MORE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS SECOND CONTRACT FOR REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR F-104S. DECISION STILL MAY BE FAR OFF BUT JOCKEYING FOR POSITION NOW UNDERWAY. POTENTIAL US COMPETITORS (E.G., NORTHROP'S COBRA, MCDONNELL-DOUGLAS' F-4F AND LOCKHEED'S F-104S) HAVE BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE BAF BUT WILL NO DOUBT NEED TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THIS LARGE CONTRACT.

5. EMBASSY WILL SHORTLY SUBMIT SUMMARY ON UPCOMING MILITARY-SALES OPPORTUNITIES. BOOCHEVER

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